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AN
ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE
PHILOLEXIAN AND PEITHOLOGIAN SOCIETIES,

August 2, 1830;

ON THE EVENING PRECEDING THE ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT

OF

COLUMBIA COLLEGE.

By *Verplanck* GULIAN C. VERPLANCK,

ONE OF THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW-YORK.

Quid ni ego magnorum virorum et imagines habeam *incitamenta virtutis* et nata-
les celebrem? Quid ni illos honoris causâ appellem? SENECA EPIST.

NEW-YORK:
G. & C. & H. CARVILL.

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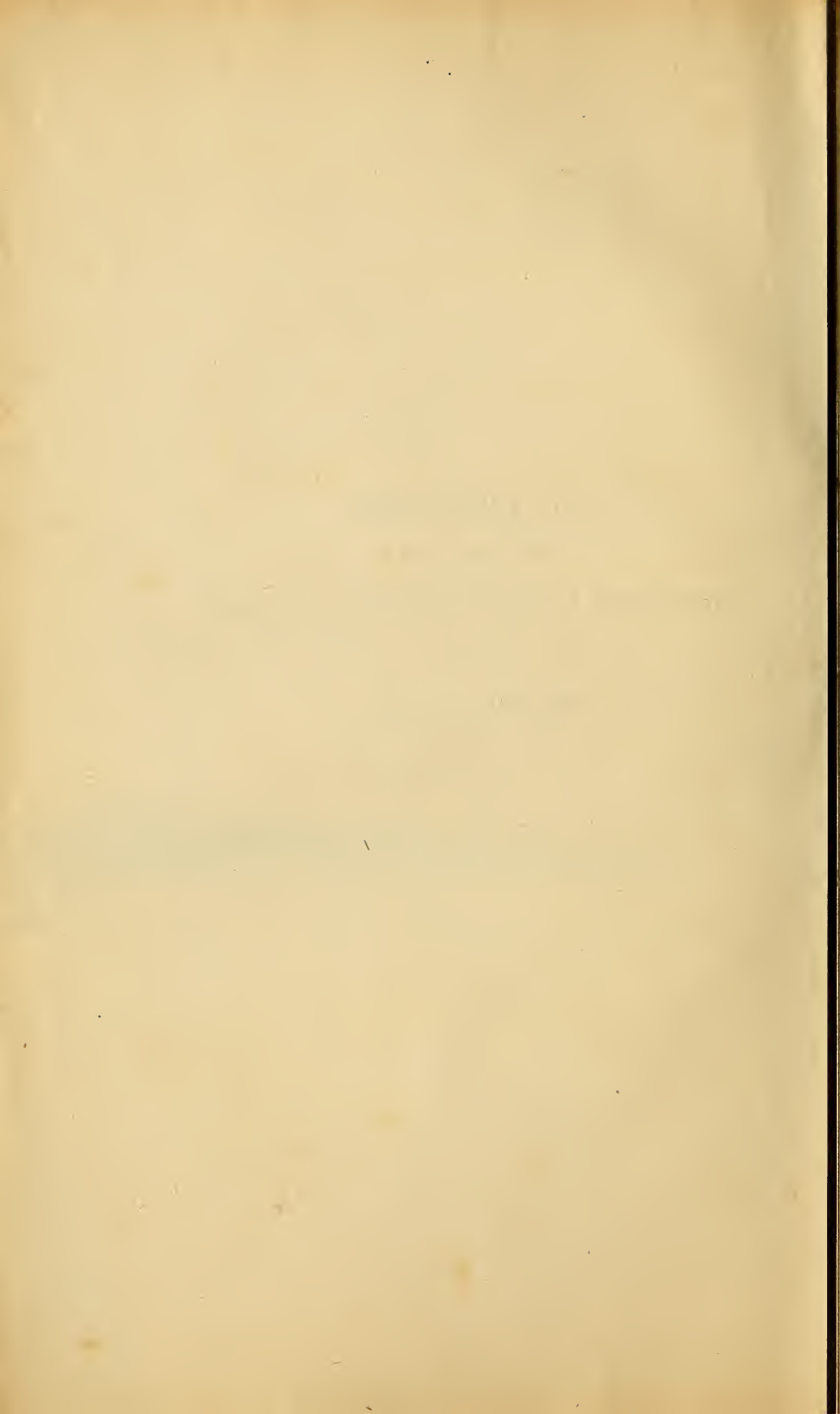
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LUDWIG & TOLEFREE, PRINTERS,
Corner of Greenwich and Vesey-streets, New-York.

A. M. P., Dec. 26, 1918.

COLUMBIA COLLEGE, }
August 3d, 1830. }

HON. GULIAN C. VERPLANCK.

SIR,—

We have been appointed a committee on the part of the Philolexian and Peithologian Societies, to communicate to you the following resolutions, passed at a joint meeting of the Societies, held August 2d, 1830, at which Hugh Maxwell, Esq. presided, and William Inglis, Esq. acted as Secretary.

“Resolved, That the thanks of the Philolexian and Peithologian Societies be presented to the Hon. Gulian C. Verplanck, for the eloquent and classical address which he has this evening delivered before them.

“Resolved, That the committee of arrangements inform Mr. Verplanck of the foregoing resolution, and request of him a copy of his address for publication.

We are, Sir, with great respect,

Your obedient servants,

BENJAMIN DRAKE,
J. H. HOBART HAWES, } *Committee.*
WILLIAM H. MILNOR, }

HON. G. C. VERPLANCK.



AN ADDRESS, &c.

THE historian Polybius had examined the institutions of the Roman republic, her laws, her customs, her military discipline, and her public policy, with the jealous curiosity of a conquered Greek, and the enlightened sagacity of a statesman and a philosopher. Himself a distinguished actor in most of the important transactions of Rome's history during his eventful times—in turns the opponent in arms or in negotiation, and the chosen friend of her greatest men, he had familiarly studied the very elements of Roman character, and was enabled to trace in it the springs and causes of the nation's greatness.

In a remarkable passage of his history, he has pointed out one ancient usage of the commonwealth as, in his opinion, eminently efficacious in forming the character of her youth, inflaming them with magnanimous desires and generous sentiments, and fitting them for the toils, the duties, and the glories of freemen. This powerful agent he found in the public honours reverently and constantly paid to their illustrious dead.

It was not merely that the funeral rites of every citizen who had deserved well of his country were solemnly attended by the whole body of the people, who, with intense and respectful interest, listened in silence to the praises of his virtues and public services, pronounced in the Forum by the most eloquent of his kinsmen or friends; but it was moreover that on such, as well as on other fitting occasions, the venerable images of a long line of yet older patriots and heroes, who in former years had illustrated the family of the deceased, were again brought before the public view, decorated with the robes and surrounded with the trophies of their well-won honours, while their great deeds were recited and their virtues extolled, and thus their memory kept fresh and living from generation to generation.

“By these means,” says the historian, “the praise and the fame of excellent men and their deeds are continually renewed; the names and the exploits of those who have deserved well of their country are made familiar to the people, and handed down to posterity; and what is by far the chief of all, the young are perpetually excited to the hope of imitating these illustrious fathers of the state, and of earning that honourable name and grateful remembrance which the good alone can obtain.”⁽¹⁾

The effect of such a usage could not be otherwise; for it was founded in the deepest knowledge of human nature.

The rules of prudence, the obligations of moral duty, the lessons of high philosophy, the exhortations of ardent patriotism, are all, in themselves, but cold generalizations, which

may command the assent of the reason and be treasured away in the memory, without warming the heart or giving any direction to the conduct. Embody these in example, enable the imagination to give to them voice and form, and they at once become living and impressive teachers of the noblest truth. Combine with this strong influence that of another great law of human nature, the principle of association ; let these examples be drawn from the lives of those who have laboured or suffered for our own good, whose mother-tongue was our own, who once breathed the air and trod the soil of our own dear native land, the fruit of whose labours we are now enjoying, the scenes of whose exertions are still before our eyes,—how eloquent then do such examples become ! When they have been made familiar to the mind, when they are combined with our earliest recollections, how little can be added to their force by fancy or rhetoric ! A simply stated fact, a date, a mere name, is then sufficient to excite the flush of patriotic sympathy, or the thrill of generous enthusiasm.

For these, the most exalted uses of History and Biography, of literature and eloquence, America has already rich and abundant materials. Here the ordinary history of centuries has been crowded into the space of a single life. Here the humble colony of one generation has, in another, risen into a powerful state, and expands to a great empire in a third. This rapid course of events could not pass along without developing the energies of minds worthy of the times, and equal to their greatest occasions. Their scene of action was vast and magnificent ; they were animated and sustained by stronger

as well as purer motives than heathen philosophy ever knew ; whilst science had armed their minds with powers, to which the knowledge of the chiefs and rulers of past ages was as that of children. It is one of the best and most exalted duties of the men of the present day, to make the characters and lives of these fathers of our country known and familiar to the youth of our land, and to accustom them to draw the lessons of wisdom, and the examples of virtue, from our own annals : “ *Heroum laudes et facta parentum, legere,*” and from them to learn “ *quæ sit cognoscere virtus.*”

It is from these considerations, and with the hope of discharging some part of this duty, that I have been induced to select the subject of the present discourse. It seemed to me, that in addressing the literary societies formed under the protection of our ancient college amongst her students and graduates, for their mutual improvement in the best uses of good learning,—meeting them, too, upon the eve of that literary anniversary when our Alma Mater is again to send forth a fresh body of her sons, from the discipline of education, to the cares and struggles of active life,—no theme could be more appropriate than the praise of some of those illustrious dead, whose memory our country cherishes with grateful affection, and whom our college proudly numbers among her eldest and favourite sons.

It has been the merit or the happy fortune of this institution, to have educated no inconsiderable number of America's greatest men. Here many of the most vigorous and original minds of the nation have received their first intellectual

discipline and impulse. This is no idle boast, no fond exaggeration. From her origin, eminent for sound and accurate instruction in classical learning and mathematical science; placed in the midst of a city, where the restless and unceasing activity of enterprize and industry keeps the mind always awake, and presents to the most careless looker-on every aspect of human character and variety of human pursuit, this college has long given her pupils most of the advantages which can stimulate application or awaken genius; and the fame of many of her sons has amply repaid the cares of their Alma Mater. Amongst these she can claim some of the fathers of our civil liberties, the founders of our national institutions, the teachers of our civil wisdom. On the same roll are inscribed the names of public benefactors, who, by the improvement or wider application of science, have enlarged the power and augmented the happiness of man, and scattered plenty over the land. There, too, are the names of those who "have turned many unto righteousness," by devoting the best gifts of learning, taste, genius, and eloquence to the study and inculcation of gospel truth and moral law.

It is not my intention to attempt giving a minute account of the lives or virtues of any one of them. That is the proper business of the historian and the biographer. My chosen task is a briefer one, but it is not less grateful or honourable. It is, to present in rapid review before you the names and characters of some few of the most distinguished of those who have thus illustrated our academic family, and, from this literary rostrum, amidst the scenes of their youthful studies and earliest distinc-

tions, surrounded in imagination by their venerable forms and the trophied honours of their maturer lives, to speak to you briefly of their virtues and talents. I cannot indeed speak of them with the eloquence of antiquity, but I trust to do it in its true spirit; turning aside from the recollection of the errors or frailty which haply may have sometimes alloyed their excellence, expelling from my own breast every narrow or bitter feeling excited by difference of opinion, which might tempt me to wrong the fame of any one of them, and striving to raise myself and my hearers to a congenial admiration of moral and intellectual worth and high deserts.

At the commencement of our revolution, this college had been in successful progress for about twenty years, under learned and able instructors, with all the collateral aids of science which the times afforded. The weight of station, authority, and perhaps of talent, in this city, was with the mother country. Dr. Cooper, the President of this college, was a wit and a scholar, whose learning and accomplishments gave him personal popularity and respect with his pupils, and of course added authority to his opinions—and those were the opinions and prejudices of the high-toned English University tory of the last century. To these halls then we should scarcely have looked for any of the earliest champions of American rights. Yet why not? In them classic lore had unfolded to the student the grand and exciting sentiments of ancient liberty; here the discipline of mathematical reasoning—a discipline, if possible, still more valuable than the conclusions which that reasoning establishes—had trained him to think and to judge for

himself; and here he had been directed by the great masters of English philosophy, by Bacon and Locke, to venerate, to feel, and to assert the rights of private judgment and conscience. Yes—learning may be, and too often has been, the slavish handmaid of power, hoodwinked by early prejudice, lured by interest or dazzled by ambition. But these are not the true and natural results,—they never can be,—of any study which otherwise enlarges the understanding and elevates the soul. Those who so believe, do but vilify Heaven's best gifts to the human race. Well hath it been said of such reasoners, by a philosophical and republican poet—

“ Oh fool ! to think the man whose ample mind
 Must grasp at all that yonder stars survey ;
 Must join the noblest forms of every kind,
 The world's most perfect image to display,
 Can e'er his country's majesty behold,
 Unmoved or cold !
 Oh fool ! to deem

That he whose thought must visit every theme
 * * * * * * *

That he, if haply some presumptuous foe,
 With false, ignoble science fraught,
 Shall spurn at freedom's faithful band ;
 That he their dear defence will shun,
 Or hide their glories from the sun,
 Or deal their vengeance with a woman's hand.”

AKENSIDE.

The annals of our college bear testimony to the same elevating truth. Her Alumni were among the foremost champions of American liberty in the cabinet and the field. There were early found Jay, and Livingston, and Morris, and Benson ; Van Cortlandt, and Rutgers, and Troup, and Hamilton.

At the beginning of that glorious struggle, Alexander Hamilton was still a youth, engaged in pursuing his college studies with that ardour and application which characterized all his mental efforts throughout life. The momentous questions of the rights of the colonies, and the powers of the parent state, had been discussed in New-York with no ordinary talent on both sides. The mind of the future statesman was roused by the subject. Like the Swedish warrior, who, when he heard for the first time the whistling of bullets about him, exclaimed, "*This* henceforth shall be my music," young Hamilton, with a nobler instinct, when he then first turned his mind to the investigation of great principles, the duties of subjects, their rights, and those of their rulers and of the state, felt the true vocation of his genius, and rushed impatiently forward to enter upon his destined career of a patriot statesman. Then it was that his talents were first employed in the public service; and (in the words of his eloquent funeral eulogist*) "America saw with astonishment a lad of seventeen in the ranks of her advocates, at a time when her advocates were sages and patriots." A few months more found the same youth the companion in arms and the confidential friend of Washington. Who amongst us does not know the other events of his life? I can touch only upon that part of it which is identified with the history of our constitution.

It was to his foresight, his influence and eloquence, more than to any other man, perhaps more than to all others, that

* Dr. Mason.

we owe that union of the states under the present constitution, which rescued us from weakness and anarchy, and gave us a permanent rank among the nations of the earth. It is well known that in the convention which framed it, opinions as to the character of the proposed instrument were held, so widely variant from each other, and so warmly, as to threaten the dissolution of the assembly without coming to any useful result. Hamilton's own theoretical plan of a constitution was undoubtedly not in unison with the principles and feelings of a majority of the people; for he thought that the state of society at home, and of public affairs abroad, required a frame of government as secure from the fluctuations of popular opinion as could be made consistent with its foundation in the public will. This was a theory, in my view, deduced from an imperfect estimate of the American character, and of the tendency and effect of representative institutions, which our ampler experience has, I trust, contradicted and refuted. But he hesitated not to sacrifice his pride of opinion to the practical good of the country. Amidst the discordant elements of parties, and the collisions which proceeded from them, his great talents were devoted with steadfast singleness of purpose to the object of national union. To this he sacrificed every secondary consideration. He sought union in the spirit of union, and finally attained it, not by the victory of a party, but, as the Convention solemnly declared, "as the result of a spirit of amity and mutual deference and concession."*

* Address of the Convention to the People of the U. S.

As this spirit gave birth to our federative government, so surely will it long continue to animate and sustain it. Whoever commends this spirit of mutual submission and concession merely as a salutary remedy against whatever ills may threaten our national union, in my mind, sees its operation but darkly and imperfectly. It is far more than this. It is the vital and animating soul of our form of government, throughout all its stages. It is bound up in all its provisions. It is taught in all our political institutions and usages, general, and state, and local. It is the earliest and most frequently repeated lesson of every citizen ; it is inculcated upon him in every exercise of his elective rights. A wisdom higher than human foresight has thus made that which is the essential support of our civil polity, the natural result of all its operations. By this the Union was formed, and by it the Union will be preserved.

The effective defence of this constitution, its luminous exposition, and its victorious adoption after a doubtful and embittered contest, give to Hamilton other and equally enduring claims upon the gratitude of posterity. In his speeches in the convention of this state, and in the more expanded vindication and exposition of the constitution contained in his numbers of the *Federalist*, whilst the immediate object of clearing up doubts, satisfying scruples, and refuting objections was victoriously obtained, he has left to succeeding generations a treasure of political science, which must ever be resorted to as the most authoritative and masterly exposition of our constitutional charter, and the most luminous commentary upon the nature and history of representative and federative government.

Then succeeded his short but brilliant administration of our finances, rendered memorable by that efficient organization of the public revenue and resources which replenished the bankrupt treasury, raised the prostrate national credit and placed it on a firm and durable basis, gave immediate activity to commerce and the arts, and security to all their pursuits. It was memorable too for a series of official reports from his pen, which have proved the inexhaustible source of instruction, of argument, of authority to our statesmen, political economists, jurists, and orators, under every administration and all forms of parties. Of the doctrines sustained in these reports, many belong to the still debateable and debated questions of economical and constitutional discussion upon which great parties and great minds have heretofore divided, or still differ. How is it then, that Hamilton's writings, like his fame, have ceased to be the property of a party, and have become that of the nation?

It was not merely that he brought to the consideration of vast and complicated questions a mind original, inventive, logical; that those native powers were supported by an untiring industry and abundant knowledge, which drew elucidation and argument from every collateral source. But it was, that this vigour of mind and amplitude of knowledge were but the instruments of a frank, and simple, and manly integrity of purpose, unstained by any selfish motive, always seeking for truth as its object, always looking to the public good as its ultimate end. It was this that stamped its peculiar character upon his eloquence, whether spoken or written. Filled with

the strong interest of his subject, he had no thought of himself. There were no flights of ambitious rhetoric, no gaudy ornament, no digressions of useless learning or ostentatious philosophy; every thing he said had relation to his subject alone, and that was viewed in every light, tried by every test, examined, scrutinized, canvassed, discussed; no objection suppressed, no difficulty avoided; till at last, whatever might be his own conclusion, nothing was wanting which could enable the hearer or reader to judge for himself. His stream of thought, as it proceeded, was swelled from a thousand fountains, but it flowed on in one full, clear, and mighty current.

It was this same characteristic of moral and intellectual frankness, that, during his life, made him, without office or patronage, the acknowledged head of a talented and powerful party; that, amidst that violence of contention which alienated friends and brothers, gained for the leader and champion of a minority the confidence of the whole nation in his purity and patriotic intentions. This won for Hamilton the high tribute of his illustrious rival, Thomas Jefferson, not only to his "colossal talents," but to his private virtues, and the good faith and undissembled honour of his public conduct. When he died, it was this recollection above all others which filled the land with gloom and sorrow.

Many years have passed away—I was then very young—but I still remember as it were yesterday, the manner in which the news of his fall flew throughout this city—the earnest inquiries which were every where heard—the expression of anx-

ious and painful interest which was seen in every countenance. On the green before the house near this city where he lay expiring, I saw collected, in silent groups, all that society most esteemed for ability or worth. There, and every where, past differences, personal or political opposition, were sunk at once and for ever, in grief and honour for the honest statesman and the eloquent patriot.

The name of John Jay is gloriously associated with that of Alexander Hamilton, in the history of our liberties and our laws. John Jay had completed his academic education in this college, several years before the commencement of the revolution; and the beginning of the contest between Great Britain and the colonies found him already established in legal reputation, and, young as he still was, singularly well fitted for his country's most arduous services, by a rare union of the dignity and gravity of mature age with youthful energy and zeal. At the age of twenty-eight, he drafted, and in effect himself formed, the first constitution of the state of New-York, under which we lived for forty-five years, which still forms the basis of our present state government, and from which other states have since borrowed many of its most remarkable and original provisions. At that age, as soon as New-York threw off her colonial character, he was appointed the first Chief Justice of the state. Then followed a long, rapid, and splendid succession of high trusts and weighty duties, the results of which are recorded in the most interesting pages of our annals. It was the moral courage of Jay, at the head of the Supreme Court of his own state, that gave confidence and union to the

people of New-York. It was from his richly stored mind that proceeded, while representing this state in the Congress of the United States, (over whose deliberations he for a time presided) many of those celebrated state papers, whose grave eloquence commanded the admiration of Europe, and drew forth the eulogy of the master orators and statesmen of the times—of Chatham and Burke—whilst, by the evidence which they gave to the wisdom and talent that guided the councils of America, they contributed to her reputation and ultimate triumph as much as the most signal victories of her arms. As our minister at Madrid and Paris, his sagacity penetrated, and his calm firmness defeated, the intricate wiles of the diplomats and cabinets of Europe, until, in illustrious association with Franklin and John Adams, he settled and signed the definitive treaty of peace, recognizing and confirming our national independence. On his return home, a not less illustrious association awaited him in a not less illustrious cause,—the establishment and defence of the present constitution, with Hamilton and Madison. The last Secretary of Foreign Affairs under the old confederation, he was selected by Washington as the first Chief Justice of the United States under the new constitution.

I need not speak of the talent with which he discharged the duties of this latter station. His early education and regular industry had made him a learned technical lawyer; and after a long suspension of these studies, he returned to the law with a mind invigorated by constant and laborious employment, enlarged by a variety of knowledge and observation,

and habituated to the investigation and exposition of the first principles of right, of liberty, and of government.

His able negociation and commercial treaty with Great Britain, and his six years' administration as Governor of this state, completed his public life.

As the character of Hamilton presents, in its soldier-like frankness and daring, a beautiful example of the spirit of chivalry applied to the pursuits of the statesman, so in that of Jay, pure and holy justice seemed to be embodied. He lived as one—

Sent forth of the Omnipotent, to run
The great career of justice.

He was endowed above most men with steadiness of purpose and self-command. He had early sought out for himself, and firmly established in his mind, the grand truths, religious, moral, or political, which were to regulate his conduct; and they were all embodied in his daily life. Hence the admirable consistency of his character, which was the more striking as it seemed to reconcile and unite apparently opposite qualities. That grave prudence, which, in common men, would have swayed every action to the side of timid caution, was in him combined with invincible energy. So too in his opinions. No man was more deeply penetrated with the doctrines or the sentiment of religion; no man more conscientiously exact in its observances; whilst no man could look with more jealousy on any intermixture of the religious with the temporal authority; no man more dreaded, or watched with more vigilant

caution, every invasion, however slight, upon the rights of private conscience.

After a long and uninterrupted series of the highest civil employments, in the most difficult times, he suddenly retired from their toils and dignities, in the full vigour of mind and body, and at an age when, in most statesmen, the objects of ambition show as gorgeously, and its aspirations are as stirring as ever. He looked upon himself as having fully discharged his debt of service to his country; and satisfied with the ample share of gratitude which he had received, he retired with cheerful content, without ever once casting a reluctant eye towards the power or dignities he had left. For the last thirty years of his remaining life, he was known to us only by the occasional appearance of his name, or the employment of his pen in the service of piety or philanthropy. A halo of veneration seemed to encircle him, as one belonging to another world, though yet lingering amongst us. When, during the last year, the tidings of his death came to us, they were received through the nation, not with sorrow or mourning, but with solemn awe; like that with which we read the mysterious passage of ancient scripture—"And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him."

Among the immortal names of our revolution and earlier political history, our college may claim yet a third son, worthy to be ranked with those of whom I have spoken.

Eloquent and learned, graced with taste and fancy, the accomplishments of elegant letters and arts, and the acquisitions of solid science, Robert R. Livingston was the fellow-labourer

of Jay and Hamilton in achieving the liberties of the United States, and in rearing the fabric of our civil institutions, as well as their ablest rival and opponent in the subsequent division of parties. He filled for twenty-five years the first law office of this state ; and during that period of the revolution in which the best talent of the nation was employed in its diplomatic service, acted as Secretary of Foreign Affairs to Congress, with an ability and talent at that time duly estimated, but which had fallen into oblivion, and become unknown to most of the present generation, until their effects were again conspicuously brought to light by the very recently published diplomatic correspondence of the American revolution.⁽²⁾ These alone are signal claims to distinction ; but in him they are lost in the blaze of far brighter and more lasting honours. His first act as an American statesman, was as one of the committee of five (Jefferson, Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, and Robert R. Livingston,) who, in the Congress of 1776, prepared and presented the Declaration of Independence. His last political transaction was the negotiating and concluding that treaty which added to our empire, Louisiana, with the command of the Mississippi and that vast territory whence one mighty state after another is now successively bursting into life. Thus the name of Livingston is deeply inscribed upon the very corner-stone of our national liberties, and on the broadest arch of our national power.

But the most important part of a country's history is not always that which is written in its political annals. The advance of knowledge, commerce, agriculture, arts, whilst they

seem but to follow in the train of good government, often operate in silence changes as gigantic in their influence on human happiness, as those revolutions which shake the world and give birth to nations. Such changes have we witnessed within our own lives, and in our own country.

Splendid as were the incidents of Chancellor Livingston's official and political career, he himself wisely looked with more satisfaction, and his best fame may hereafter rest, upon his efficient agency as an enlightened private citizen in hastening forward the march of improvement over our land. He was among the first in this state who applied to agriculture the science and the interest of a liberal study, braving the laugh of the ignorant and the sneers of the prejudiced at the failure of his experiments, and richly rewarded in their success by the general good he had earned. The arts of taste and design found in him one of their earliest and most judicious patrons. Under his auspices the first academy in this country for their cultivation was formed, and under his immediate direction it was provided with the best means of improvement for the artist, and of instruction and refinement to the general taste. Above all, his agency in the invention of steam-navigation, his enlightened science in perceiving its practicability and admirable use, his prophetic confidence in ultimate success amidst repeated disappointments, losses, and ridicule, and finally his sagacity in seizing upon and associating with himself the practical genius of Fulton, whose plans had been rejected with scorn by the rulers, the *savans*, and the capitalists of the old world, combine to place him in the highest ranks of the last-

ing benefactors of the human race. It is a beautiful thought of Lord Bacon's, that, antiquity, which honoured the law-givers, the founders or deliverers of states, but with the title of worthies or demigods, rightly bestowed upon those who had invented or improved the arts and commodities of human life, "honours (as he terms them) heroical and divine;" because the merit of the former is confined within the circle of one age or nation, but that of the others is indeed like the benefits of heaven, being permanent and universal. "The former," says he, "is mixed with strife and perturbation; but the latter, like the true presence of Deity, comes without noise or agitation."*

It was therefore a proud eulogy, as well as a true one, which a distinguished professor (whose own name adds scientific lustre to the catalogue of her sons) lately pronounced upon this college, when he traced to her walls and lecture-rooms, the germs of the greatest practical improvements which science has bestowed upon our state and nation,—the steam-navigation of Livingston and Stevens, (for the name of Stevens belongs also to us) (³) and the canal system of Morris and Clinton.

The memory of De Witt Clinton, the first graduate after the peace of 1783, is another brilliant and treasured possession of this college. After the numerous tributes which have so recently been paid to his memory, and especially that luminous view of his character as a scholar and a statesman, as the promoter of good education and useful improvement, contained

* Advancement of Learning, l. i.

in the discourse lately delivered from this place, by Professor Renwick, to the Alumni of Columbia College, any thing I could now say on the same subject would be but useless repetition. Else would I gladly pay the homage due to his eminent and lasting services, and honour that lofty ambition which taught him to look to designs of grand utility, and to their successful execution, as his arts of gaining or redeeming the confidence of a generous and public-spirited people. For whatever of party animosity might have ever blinded me to his merits, had died away long before his death; and I could now utter his honest praises without the imputation of hollow pretence from others, or the mortifying consciousness in my own breast, of rendering unwilling and tardy justice.

I have already exhausted much of the time and attention I have a right to claim of you; and there still remain many names worthy of much honour, whom I had intended to commemorate. Some of these I must reluctantly pass over in silence, and of others I can do no more than awaken your respect or affection by a brief and hurried mention.

Yet the lives of some of them afford the richest materials for biography, and are indissolubly associated with the most interesting events of our history. There was Richard Harrison, alike in years and in parental care the father of our college, for half a century the most learned and accomplished lawyer of a learned bar, who during a long and busy life continued to pursue with unabated interest and application, the study of the best literature of antiquity and modern languages, and found in those studies which in early youth had ripened his

taste, and which graced the severer and profound legal science of his maturer life, the still animating occupation and amusement of an honourable and honoured old age.

There was the eloquent and highly gifted Gouverneur Morris, fitted for the stirring times of revolution by the buoyant energy of his character, and formed to grace any scene by the ready versatility of his talent, the brilliancy of his wit and imagination, and the wide range of his knowledge and accomplishments. The marks of his genius are to be seen every where ; for he was the companion of Hamilton and Jay in their labours for the independence of this nation, and the establishment of this government ; and he was the associate of Clinton in joining the ocean with the lakes.

Nor can I pass over in utter silence the amiable Tompkins, the rival and opponent of Clinton ; for there is one remarkable incident in his life, peculiarly proper to be remembered here, and upon such an occasion as this. It is not that in the short space of twenty-five years, he passed in quick and unbroken succession through every high trust which the people of this state could bestow upon him. It is not that in all of them he showed himself equal to their important duties ; that, throughout all of them, his gentle bearing, his many amiable and generous qualities, won for him the people's love ; that in the dark hour of national peril, when the power of the Union was shattered, and its resources bankrupt, he put that popularity to the noblest use, by rallying the people of this state as one man to the common defence, until, in the oblivion of former politi-

cal contentions, New-York rose with a giant's strength and raised its united voice,—that voice, to the whole land,

—The liveliest pledge
Of hope, in fear or danger; heard so oft
In worst extremes, and on the perilous edge
Of battle where it raged.

These are recollections which still warm the hearts of thousands. There is another which more peculiarly belongs to us. It was during his administration of the government of this state, and under his recommendation and direction, that our general common school system was formed and put into operation—a system admirable for the happy ingenuity with which state patronage and superintendence are combined with local and individual support and supervision—full of present efficiency, and yet capable of illimitable expansion and of adaptation to the wants of an increasing population, and their progressive demands for better instruction and higher knowledge.

Rough and imperfect as these outlines of character have necessarily been, they have yet covered so much of my canvass that I have little room left for others, whom, when the plan of this discourse first occurred to me, I meant to have made conspicuous in it. To our statesmen and jurists, the benefactors of society and the promoters of the arts, I wished to add with equal respect our departed scholars, and authors, and divines. They are many, but must not all be wholly omitted. We can never in this hall forget the mild wisdom of our former Presi-

dent, Bishop Moore.* His placid dignity of aspect is still before me. The tremulous melody of his winning and touching eloquence still sounds in my ears. And, too, if I can place no worthier offering on the tomb of Bowden,† let me at least mention him with a pupil's grateful remembrance, as a scholar, a reasoner, and a gentleman; and bear witness to his pure taste, his deep and accurate erudition, his logical acuteness, and the dignified rectitude of his principles and character.

Thence I might lead you along among the tombs of the learned and the good, who, in their days of youth and hope, filled these halls, and who now rest in peace; pausing ever and anon, to mourn over some one of those whom we have revered or loved, until we stopped together at the still fresh grave of young Bruent—

—————Dead before his prime,
Young Lycidas! and hath not left his peer.

Within a few weeks a bright light has been extinguished, a mighty mind has departed. If scholarship, at once extensive and profound, if the rare union of intimate acquaintance with books, and deep learning in the spirits and ways of men, if eloquence powerful, impressive, peculiar, original, if that strength of mind which masters others to its will, and sways

* Rt. Rev. Benjamin Moore, Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the state of New-York, and President of Columbia College.

† Dr. John Bowden, for many years Professor of Moral Philosophy and Logic in Columbia College.

‡ Rev. Mathias Bruen, Pastor of the Prince-street Presbyterian Church.

opinion, if devotion and zeal for the best interests of mankind, animating and directing that learning, sagacity and eloquence, —if such endowments can add lustre or dignity to character, that praise is Mason's.

Almost from the hour he left these walls, he exercised a wide and commanding influence over the minds of others. Posterity will doubtless judge of his talent chiefly from his written productions. These are but fragments of his mind; the vigorous, but accidental exertions of his strength. Yet the future reader will see in these, the productions of original genius acting upon ample stores of learning. The author is there seen seizing his subject with the gigantic grasp of Johnson or Horsley, stripping off and throwing contemptuously aside the common-places which might belong to it, and embodying his own weighty sense in language always peculiarly his own, always forcible, always perspicuous, frequently condensed and polished, often fervid, glowing, and impassioned.

Still his writings afford, I repeat, an inadequate idea of the riches of his intellect. A more favourite field of exertion than that of mere authorship, (for I believe that, like many men of the fullest and the readiest minds, he sat down reluctantly to the toil of elaborate composition,) was in the business of education. It was as Provost of this college, as President of Dickinson college, and, for a much longer period, and with yet greater zeal, as head of the theological school of his own church, that he applied those principles which he has laid down with admirable force and precision, in that masterly report to the Trustees of Columbia College, which forms the

basis of their present system of academic instruction. There it was that he laboured, not to teach the mere knowledge of words, or the mere knowledge of things, but (I use his own language) "to teach his pupils to get knowledge for themselves, by eliciting their faculties, and forming them to the *habit* of *thinking*."*

But by far the highest proofs of Dr. Mason's ability were shown in their proper place, his own pulpit; and there, chief of all, in that immense and continuous system of scriptural exposition and commentary, which he was, for many years, accustomed to give, according to the old usage of the Scotch churches.

Whilst the very nature of these unwritten and extemporaneous, but not unprepared expositions, rejected the forms and method of rhetorical art, they were the more singularly adapted to the kind and variety of his talent. There, he was wont to pour forth the overwhelming opulence of his mind in irregular but magnificent profusion, laying alike under contribution to his object, theological learning, classic lore, and the literature of the day; illustrating the conclusions of the logician by acute observations upon life and manners; alternately convincing the reason, and searching and probing the deep recesses of the conscience; now drawing moral lessons from the history of the long-buried past, and now commenting upon the events or the vices of the day, or perhaps the follies of the hour; now lifting aloft the blazing torch of Christian philosophy to guide the honest seeker after truth, and now shower-

* Report to Trustees of Columbia College.

ing his withering scorn upon the scoffer's head ; explaining, defending, deducing, enforcing his doctrines or precepts, sometimes with colloquial familiarity, and then again in a bold and swelling eloquence, which stirred and warmed the heart like the sound of a trumpet.

It was in his noon-day of life, his prime of mind, when the little asperities of character which often accompany the consciousness of high mental power, were softened and mellowed away, when his views and opinions had been opened and liberalized by large experience and independent thought, when every thing promised a long, and glorious, and useful career, that the numbing hand of disease was laid upon him, and the infirmities of premature age arrested alike his professional duties and his plans of literary enterprize. Such are the hopes of man ! Over his loss to her churches, her studies, and the training of her ministry, Religion has long mourned. Among his literary enterprizes thus interrupted, was his long meditated biography of Hamilton, on which he had wished and hoped to put forth the whole force of his genius. He had studied his subject deeply ; he was intimately acquainted with the character of his hero and his friend ; and he would have poured forth his soul in his eulogy, with the sympathy of congenial talent, and the eloquence of fond affection.

It has accidentally happened, (for it was not in the precise order of time) that I commenced this broken record of our deceased collegiate worthies with the name of Hamilton. Can I close it more appropriately, or with more dignity to our college, than with that of Mason ?

MY FRIENDS AND BROTHERS

OF THE PHILOLEXIAN AND PEITHOLOGIAN SOCIETIES—

THE short and hurried notices which I have presented to you, form, I fear, a very poor tribute to the worth of those whom I have aspired to celebrate ; but, for the end I had mainly in view in selecting their eulogy for my theme, I have said enough, and more than enough. I have hoped to show you, by the clear evidence of such examples, the rich advantages of education which you have enjoyed, the solemn duties which such advantages impose, the ample heritage of renown which it has fallen to you to preserve or augment, the claims of society upon us, the broad avenues of glorious and beneficent exertion which open before us. Thither truth and virtue point you the way. Thither the great men who have formerly issued from these halls beckon to you to follow them.

In our connexion with them and their fame, there can be nothing to inflate vanity or to sooth indolence. It cannot, like the privileges and pride of noble birth, be turned to any purpose of delusion to others, or furnish food for our own self-conceit. Our accidental education in the halls where Jay, and Livingston, and Clinton once studied, confers no dignity upon us, except so far as we may worthily emulate them ; but it overwhelms us with shame if we disgrace the memory of our elder brothers—if we prove false and recreant to our academic mother.

The character of our country's genius is eminently practical ; and it has struck me with great force, that this too is the pre-

dominant characteristic of all those whom I have pointed out to your emulation. Not one of them was a mere scholar, contented with the bare acquirement of learning, or of learned fame. Their science, their literature, their talent were all consecrated to the duties of society, and the general weal. In this, surely, we may imitate them.

Differing as they did in some points of opinion from each other—errng as they sometimes did in conduct—those differences and errors may teach us the infirmity of all human wisdom, and the duty of candid and tolerant judgment; but let us look rather to their virtues than their imperfections, and remember that they now live in our grateful memory, because formerly they lived not for themselves alone.

Let us not sooth our sloth, or vindicate our selfishness, by the poor excuse, that their excellence was the fruit of rare genius, or still rarer contingencies of fortune, which we have no right to claim or to hope. For us this is no apology. What may be the value of our talents or attainments to others as well as to ourselves, cannot be known until it be tried. If we are once excited to warm aspirations after true excellence, the materials of action will not long be wanting.

It is true that we have not again a nation's liberties to achieve. We have not now to lay once more the foundations of its government. But our liberties are always to be watched over, guarded, and defended. Our laws are to be improved, somewhat in their equity, much in their policy. Physical science, much as it has advanced, may now be carried forwards far beyond what was once deemed the extravagance of the

wildest dreamer. That science, as well as all other valuable information, is no longer to remain the hoarded possession of a chosen few, but must be made popular and elementary, and placed within the reach of all. In that other vast region of science which relates to mind and morals, our duties are still more numerous and urgent. Prejudices and errors are to be vanquished; truth is sometimes to be defended from assault or insult, always to be inculcated, explained, enforced.

It is our happy lot to live in an age and country where the field of usefulness is literally unbounded; where, in the indefinite increase of numbers and general intelligence, no well directed effort to better the condition of others can be little or worthless. As it recedes from us, its effect swells up into ilimitable and startling magnitude. Diffidence, or rather sloth in her garb, may whisper, that it will be far beyond our strength to work out any of those conquests over moral or physical evil, for which posterity reserves the never-fading wreath of true renown. Be it so. Yet wherefore has talent been given to us, and knowledge painfully won, if we cannot, in our place and sphere, contribute something to the sacred cause of virtue, freedom, happiness, truth? Obscurely it may be, but not the less honestly; without the gratification of personal distinction, but certainly not without the better reward of conscious well-doing.

Nevertheless, despite of these and all such considerations, it must be that in some of us, indeed, at times in all of us, low thoughts and selfish passions will gain possession of the mind.

I am speaking to scholars, and may without pedantry recall to them that familiar but striking passage of ancient history,

of which the great English moral poet has made so exquisite a use, when the conqueror of his country,

Ignobly vain and impotently great,
Showed Rome her Cato's image drawn in state :
As her dead Father's reverent image past,
The pomp was saddened, and the day o'ercast ;
The triumph ceased—tears gushed from every eye——

Even so may it be with us. The memorials of those who have shared our early studies, and turned them to worthier uses than we have done, need not be sought for in the sculptured marble and bronze. They are around us and about us ; they meet us in the halls of legislation and the courts of justice ; in the busy commerce of our ports, and the richly-freighted navigation of our rivers and canals ; in our system of education, our schools, our colleges, and pulpits. Every where we may trace the impress of their minds, every where we may hear their monitorial voices.

Then, whatever tyrant passion may have obtained the mastery of our hearts ; whether bad ambition, or base avarice, or the love of pleasure, or more fatal indolence ; let us listen to those voices : let us be roused by the admonition of those memorials to bid the triumph of the passions cease, and suffer the world's gaudy pageant to pass along unheeded.

That sway is then at an end. Those misty delusions fade away. The guiding star of our youth beams brightly once again upon the rough pathway of virtue before us. We erect ourselves to holier contemplation, and purer desires. We gird ourselves to the true purpose of good education, the performance of our duty to our God, our country, and our kind.

NOTES.

NOTE I.

Εξ ὧν καινοποιούμενος ἀεὶ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀνδρῶν τῆς ἐπ' ἀρετῇ Φήκης, ἀθανατίζεται μὲν ἡ τῶν καλόν τι διαπραξαμένων εὐκλεία, γνώριμος δὲ τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ παραδόσιμος τοῖς ἐπιγινομένοις ἡ τῶν εὐεργετησάντων τὴν πατρίδα γίνεται δόξα. τὸ δὲ μέγισον, οἱ νέοι παρορμῶνται πρὸς τὸ πᾶν ὑπομένειν ὑπὲρ τῶν κοινῶν πραγμάτων, χάριν τῇ τυχεῖν τῆς συνακο-
λυσθῆσθαι τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς τῶν ἀνδρῶν εὐκλείας.—Polybius, Hist. VI. 52.

NOTE II.

The diplomatic correspondence of the Revolution preserved in the archives of the government of the United States, was, for obvious reasons, kept secret for many years. Those reasons having now ceased, and the correspondence become mere matter of history, it was ordered to be published some time ago, under the direction of the President of the United States, by a joint resolution of the two houses of Congress; and during the last year seven volumes, containing the diplomatic letters of Franklin, Jay, J. Adams, Laurens, and others have been printed. In the first years of the revolution, the correspondence was addressed by our Ministers abroad to the Committee of Foreign Affairs, and the negotiations conducted under their direction. Various inconveniences arose from this arrangement, and our agents abroad "frequently complained that their despatches were not answered, and that they were embarrassed for want

of intelligence." In consequence of this, in 1781 the committee was dissolved, and the foreign correspondence placed under the control of a Secretary of Foreign Affairs, to which office Robert R. Livingston was appointed. When he came into the office, says the preface to the official publication of this correspondence, "a salutary change took place. His letters are numerous, full, and instructive." This too, it must be remembered, was during the most important period of our foreign relations, when the negotiations were pending which led to the first treaties with the powers of the European continent acknowledging our independence—when the first loans were negotiated abroad on the credit of our new government—and finally, when the definitive treaty of peace with Great Britain was settled and signed, after many delays and difficulties.

NOTE III.

Col. John Stevens, of Hoboken, a graduate of 1768, is now one of the oldest living Alumni of this college. His agency in the invention, introduction, and gradual improvement of steam-boats, from the early and imperfect experiments made upon the Hudson and Delaware, between 1785 and 1800 up to the admirable mechanism and models of the boats now constructed and owned by his sons, is well known to all who have paid any attention to the history of steam navigation; and had not the plan of this address excluded any honours to the living, it would have claimed a distinguished place in these pages. I cannot, however, pass over this opportunity of noticing another less known claim of this venerable and patriotic citizen to public gratitude, in another instance in which his enlightened science anticipated the progress of improvement. There is no subject which is now likely to occupy a larger portion of the capital, enterprize, and useful science both of this country and Europe, than the use of rail-roads. But many years before their adoption and use upon any extensive scale, and long before the combination of steam-carriages with them

had been suggested elsewhere, Col. Stevens addressed a memoir to the Canal Commissioners of New-York, then engaged in the preparatory surveys for the Erie and Champlain canals, wherein he pointed out and explained the practicability and advantages of rail-roads upon the largest possible scale. This, with the correspondence with De Witt Clinton, R. R. Livingston, and Gouverneur Morris, which resulted from it, he published in 1812, under the title of "Documents tending to prove the superior advantages of rail-ways and steam-carriages over canal-navigation."

In 1819, he again brought this subject before the public in another and modified form. I then represented the city and county of New-York in the state Legislature, and was a member of the committee upon canals and internal improvement; in consequence of which I had the honour of presenting an elaborate and able memorial from Col. Stevens, in which he again stated and explained the advantages of this mode of transportation, with all the additional lights which the experience of eight years had afforded, and recommended to the Legislature the combining of rail-roads with the great system of internal improvement in which the state was then ardently engaged. He was, however, still too far in advance of the times; and though the memorial received a respectful reference, and was ordered to be printed for the use of the Legislature and distribution, it led at that time to no immediate practical result, though it was probably the germ of some of the useful private enterprizes of this nature now in progress.

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